

# RELATIONS BETWEEN OFFICERS AND ENLISTED PERSONNEL

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## WHAT OFFICERS AND NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS CAN DO TO STRENGTHEN THEIR RELATIONS

### Understanding officer and noncommissioned officer (NCO) responsibilities

A complementary relationship and mutual respect between officers and NCOs are traditions of the United States Army. An important part of effective leadership is the ability of commissioned officers and warrant officers to work together with noncommissioned officers. To develop an effective working relationship, both groups must recognize the similarities and differences regarding their respective roles, duties, and responsibilities.

There is no well-defined line separating the responsibilities performed by officers and NCOs. Commanders generally establish a set of norms and standards. Officers lead non-commissioned officers and assist them in accomplishing their responsibilities. Officers cannot simply state that *this is an issue for sergeants*, nor should they do the work expected of NCOs. Officers should give subordinates the directives, resources, assistance, and supervision necessary for them to fulfill their duties. Likewise, noncommissioned officers have the responsibility to help and advise officers in carrying out their duties. Missions require officers and NCOs to work collectively, advise and assist each other, and to learn from one another. (FM 22-100, *Military Leadership*, 1990, page 74, endorsed by General Carl E. Vuono.

#### [Officer and noncommissioned officer responsibilities]

Officers command, establish standards, plan, and schedule the work of the Army; they focus on joint training, which will result in mission accomplishment by the unit; officers are primarily involved in operations, training, and other related activities; they focus on unit effectiveness and readiness; officers pay particular attention to performance objectives, training, and the professional development of NCOs; they create the conditions in which noncommissioned officers can accomplish their tasks given time available and other resources.

Noncommissioned officers direct daily army operations in accordance with orders, directives, and established standards; they focus on the individual and collective training of soldiers, which produces the skills necessary for mission accomplishment; NCOs focus on each noncommissioned officer and subordinate soldier and on small groups of the unit to ensure that each one is well prepared, highly motivated, ready, and operational; they focus on performance standards, training, and the professional development of noncommissioned officers and other enlisted personnel; NCOs assign tasks to be accomplished. (FM 22-100, *Military Leadership*, 1983, page 241, endorsed by General John A. Wickham.

The key element in combat capabilities is the establishment of effective relationships between officers and enlisted personnel within a unit. Everything accomplished by the unit requires balance and excellence. Officers and noncommissioned officers must ensure that this sense of balance is maintained in the unit. Officers will be good at some tasks, while enlisted personnel will be better at others. That is the way we are. The relationship between officers and noncommissioned officers is like a marriage. When you are married, you take care of your spouse. Together, you ensure that everything you do turns out well. –Major General Donald R. Infante and Sergeant Major Norman J. Oliver, *The Officer and the NCO: Who Does What?*, Officers' Call, March-April 1989, pages 4 and 6.

I wanted the officers to remain awake all night long trying to determine how to fight better, how better to conduct operations, and not wasting time on issues that enlisted personnel should handle. –General William A. DePuy, in an address delivered before the TRADOC Commanders' Conference, December 10-11, 1975.

The goal of the noncommissioned officer corps, whose role is to manage daily army operations so that the officer corps has time to command, is to continue improving the Army at each step. We want to leave it better than we found it. –Sergeant Major of the Army William G. Bainbridge, *Quality, Training and Motivation*, Army Magazine, October 1976, page 29.

The responsibilities are often times described as *what* (to do) and *how* (to do it). The *what* responsibilities refer to officer duties and the *how* responsibilities refer to noncommissioned-officer duties. For example, upon being assigned the task of emplacing an obstacle, unit commanders have two basic responsibilities:

*What:* The officer describes the purpose of the obstacle (recede, interrupt, delay, obstruct), the general location, and possible types.

*How:* The NCO takes charge of positioning the obstacle, guiding enlisted personnel, and ensuring that the obstacle is emplaced according to standards. –Command Sergeant Major Roy L. Burns, *Bridge the Gap*, Engineer Magazine, November 1993, page 57.

Officers and NCOs in a unit should determine the precise breakdown of responsibilities and tasks by taking into consideration the mission, situation, capabilities, and the personalities of the commanders working with this particular team. –DA Pam 600-25, *U.S. Army Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Guide*, 1987, page 7.

There is no need to say much regarding a re-examination of the table of distribution of responsibilities between officers and NCOs. --Lieutenant General

Dir John Winthrop Hackett, DA Pam 360-302, *Officers Call: The Profession of Arms*, 1966, page 38, endorsed by General Harold K. Johnson.

### **Encourage the Separation of Responsibilities**

Throughout all my years of service, I have opposed close supervision by officers of tasks that appropriately corresponded to NCOs. I felt that the result would have been better had the proper trust been given to an NCO. Officers, with their larger salaries, should have been involved in project planning and in other advanced preparation tasks. —General of the Army George C. Marshall, 1941, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. 2, pages 545-546.

Especially in organizations with a surplus of officers, there is a tendency to allow officers to usurp the authority of noncommissioned officers. This practice should be discontinued. As a rule, officers should deal with enlisted soldiers by going through the appropriate NCOs. —War Department Circular 70, *Noncommissioned Officers*, 1944, page 2, endorsed by General George C. Marshall.

Do not bypass your NCO by trying to demonstrate how busy he is by doing his work for him. —General Bruce C. Clarke, 1954, *Clarke of St. Vith*, page 207.

In order to provide all the professional development possible to a noncommissioned officer, thereby enabling him to perform his duties, a commander should assign him the appropriate responsibilities and allow him to hold his position of authority. To achieve this, it is not necessary to lower the level of performance standards. Honest mistakes can be expected and tolerated, but should be corrected. Senior personnel should not take over the responsibilities that provide the experience necessary for developing younger commanders. —General Bruce C. Clarke, 1954, *Noncommissioned Officer Leadership*, Infantry Magazine, November-December 1974, page 26.

My years in the Army have shown me that when you fail to place trust in NCOs and officers continually oversee them, you do not have true noncommissioned officers nor units fit for combat. —Soviet Union Marshall G. Zhukov, *Reminiscences and Reflections*, Vol. 1, 1974, page 50.

When NCOs ask me what to do to ensure officers allow them to do their work, I tell them that “any piece (of the pie) that an officer gives them to do, do it by putting forth your best effort, and before you realize it, you will have the whole pie.” —SMC James C. KcKinney, *Advice to NCOs Today – Be Patient and Professional*, Field Artillery Magazine, October 1993, page 6.

The good noncommissioned officer is never devoid of trust, whether it be for conducting the mission or communicating to his superior that he/she is

interfering in issues traditionally corresponding to NCOs. –SMC William G. Bainbridge, *We Have Met the Challenge*, ARMY Magazine, October 1978, page 27.

If the selection of good NCOs and enlisted soldiers is made by an officer commanding the regiment, and if this officer would allow these individuals to do their work, they would undoubtedly do it. – Annotation from the diary of an unknown British sergeant, Peninsular Campaign, 1812, *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations*, page 214.

### **Understanding noncommissioned-officer authority**

Command authority is not limited to officers. A commander is a leader, who, as part of his official functions, leads and has authority over soldiers. Enlisted army personnel can possess command authority. The tank commander, squad leader, section leader, or platoon sergeant employs command authority to lead and guide soldiers. *The Army Noncommissioned Officer Guide*, 1986, pages 17 and 18, endorsed by Gen. John A. Wickham.

A colonel does not command 3,000 soldiers; nor does a major command 1,000 soldiers; or a captain, 250. A colonel commands three battalions, a major, four companies, a captain, four platoons, and a platoon leader, four squads—the squad leader has the largest command of all. Let's not forget that. –General De Maud'Huy, *A Military Testament*, from the 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry, 3rd ID, in a letter dated 2 December 1969 in *Relations between Officers and Noncommissioned Officers*, USASMA Document, Group #13, Class #2.

An army sergeant, if he is a squad leader or tank commander, is a commander just like an officer. There is absolutely no difference. This is simply the smallest tactical element. –General William E. DePuy, in an address before the TRADOC Commanders' Conference, 10-11 December 1975.

Never forget that noncommissioned officers occupy the first command echelon.

--Major General W. A. Cunningham, memorandum, *Proper Utilization of Noncommissioned Officers*, 3 September 1963, page 5.

There is only one chain of command in our army, and it is made up of officers and noncommissioned officers. –Colonel Dandridge M. (Mike) Malone, *Small-Unit Leadership: A Common Sense Approach*, 1983, page 52.

## BATTALION COMMANDER – COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR

### Battalion Commanders and the Command Sergeant Major

No one wishes you more success than your command sergeant major, but you have to establish trust with him for this to happen – he is the first individual that you should approach. I have not assumed any command, including that of chief of staff, in which the command sergeant major has not been the first person with whom I have spent time. –General Carl E. Vuono, in an address to the Pre-Command Course, *“Collected Works,”* 1991, page 440.

Establish a good relationship with your command sergeant major—one of complete trust between each of you. Share your ideas; listen to what he has to say. He probably knows more about the Army than you do. He definitely knows more about soldiers than you. He undoubtedly is more familiar with the way to get things done through the noncommissioned-officer chain of command. Utilize his abilities in support of what you are attempting to accomplish. The entire NCO corps from your unit will feel full of enthusiasm because of this relationship and will consider it to be one of strength. –General John A. Wickham, in an address before the Pre-Command Course, *Collected Works*, 1987, page 335.

If we are going to have a strong succession of CSMs, the individuals selected for these positions should be more than figureheads or management specialists. They should be energetic professionals, extensively skilled and dedicated, who feel more at home in the field with soldiers than behind a desk at the headquarters building. They must be individuals who seek opportunities to be among troops in their units and who can see the problems that exist at the troop level. Their selflessness, personal integrity, and moral courage should be irrefutable. – General Harold K. Johnson, 1967, in *CSMs—They Must Be Much More Than Figureheads*, NCO Journal, Summer 1995, page 45.

When seeking out the written specifications describing a sergeant major, there is always a statement preceding the description. This is a tragedy. It is written that he is responsible for keeping his commander informed on issues related to enlisted personnel. In other words, this means that the sergeant major is the State Department’s ambassador and an extraordinary and plenipotentiary statesman. He remains watchful of what is taking place so that he can report it to the commander. Well, I believe that he can do this, but this is an incomplete vision of what a sergeant major is supposed to do. –General William E. DePuy, in an address given before the TRADOC Commanders’ Conference, December 10-11, 1975.

The command sergeant major is the enlisted soldier with the greatest experience in the battalion, and limiting his duties and responsibilities to matters related to operations within the garrison results in a failure to utilize to the maximum degree his background, experience, rank, and position.



We must discuss the combat role of the CSM as well as his garrison role, arrive at an agreement, and secure the necessary resources for him. As a minimum, the CSM should have a vehicle, a driver, and a radio capable of handling secure transmissions. In order for the CSM to operate effectively as an extension of the commander for enlisted personnel, he should stay visible and in contact with soldiers during all garrison unit activities, training, and in the tactical environment. –Colonel Claude W. Abate and Lieutenant Colonel Warren P. Giddings, *What is a Sergeant Major*, USAWC Document, 1985, pages 26, 29, and 35.

Commanders should analyze all the areas that need to be examined and decide how they will be analyzed. No commander should or have the time to personally inspect each area. He should decide where emphasis should be placed, what should be inspected using different means, what other areas should be inspected by the executive officer or CSM, and what areas the commander should inspect himself. –Colonel Donald L. Langridge, *Command, Leadership, and Effective Staff Support*, 1996, page 68.

The CSM and I will intentionally not remain together in the area during training events. Separately, we can cover twice as much of what is occurring. –Colonel Glenn A. Smith, *Battalion Commanders Speak Out*, 1977, page 1-20.

The battalion commander spends a large amount of his time advising. Over time, the CSM will become familiar with the commander's ideas and opinions on specific matters. The CSM can assist the commander, handling those cases where the soldier does not specifically need to see the battalion commander. The CSM will find that he is capable of resolving at least 90% of the problems heading for the battalion commander's office. –Lieutenant Colonel John L. Lorms, *The Role and Duties of the CSM*, Infantry Magazine, January-February 1974, page 36.

Allow the CSM to do his work and yours will be easier. –Lieutenant Colonel Jerry H. Hogan, *Once You Assume Command, Command!*, Army Magazine, January 1979, page 32.

The most valuable asset that the battalion command sergeant major possesses is the quality of his leadership. As the senior noncommissioned officer in the battalion, the CSM enjoys special respect; all NCOs look to him as a role model.

The CSM should review event plans and schedules before the S-3 publishes them. Familiar with all the battalion's commitments, he can identify scheduling conflicts and offer observations regarding directives coming from higher headquarters, often from a perspective different from that of the S-3 or

executive officer. It is necessary for him to review these documents in order to avoid unnecessary changes to schedules or training plans.

The battalion command sergeant major is an essential member of the battalion. His influence and presence should be correctly and effectively transmitted throughout the entire battalion. [I believe that] the complete integration of the CSM in the battalion would be much more beneficial for soldiers than limiting him to his primary field of expertise. I do not want him to neglect those areas where he has less experience.

The CSM should help to improve his unit's image among his contemporaries. Because the battalion was part of the maneuver brigade, the CSM should maintain contact with the other CSMs assigned to the brigade. This interrelationship often affords the opportunity for other battalions to form opinions of other battalions, and the impression generated by the CSM may serve strongly to influence those opinions. Each time the brigade commander directs an action through CSM channels, the individuals involved support the action with competency and ensure that it is promptly accomplished. If the other CSMs recognize the accomplishments of the battalion, the success is based on the ability of the CSM to work jointly with his counterparts. The positive feedback received from these CSMs will have a positive impact on maneuver-unit and battalion troops.

The presence of the CSM in the motor pool inspires soldiers, aids in generating interest in the tasks, and keeps individuals working productively during the brief time assigned for maintenance. Units in which soldiers adhere to the -10 Manual to conduct preventive-maintenance inspections and services usually have the best maintenance program. One method for verifying the degree of maintenance discipline in a unit is to walk through the center area of the motor pool and see if soldiers are using the -10 Manual to conduct maintenance. The presence of the battalion commander and the CSM in the motor pool during the time when preventive-maintenance checks and services are being performed encourages the sections to accomplish their duties with greater effectiveness, and in order to maintain this skill, continual emphasis becomes necessary. Once soldiers come to realize that the CSM and the battalion commander will be making frequent visits to the motor pool to verify preventive-maintenance inspections and services, they will redouble their efforts to maintain good work habits.

The battalion sponsorship program is one of the key programs affecting the battalion. The impact of this program often lasts the entire time soldiers are assigned to the unit. The CSM should ensure that the part of the program applying to enlisted personnel is very dynamic. —Lieutenant Colonel James R. Siket, *Duties and Roles of the Battalion Command Sergeant Major*, 1987, pages 13-14, 8, 21, 5, 9-10, 11-12, 18, and 19.

The disposition of the commander in dealing with the CSM is the perspective of the commander regarding how this relationship should be. The commander's intent is given to the CSM on the first day and is updated informally each month—this is the principle of a flexible relationship. Although the wording may change over time, and new teams will be established, the basic command philosophy and the role of the senior enlisted commander in this relationship will remain constant.

Five key points provide the link between flexibility and the strength of the team. First, responsibilities must be explained in detail to establish a focal point of interest and efficiency. These responsibilities also serve to establish accountability.

Second, the commander should understand that the command sergeant major is an expert in his field, without being an officer, and that two separate and distinct careers exist. The commander will not aspire to be a noncommissioned officer, but neither will the command sergeant major desire to be an officer.

The third point is open dialogue—easy to say, but difficult to put into practice. The two commanders should meet each workday. It does not matter how well one believes things are going, daily coordination is necessary.

The next point involves honesty and communication, whether the days are good or bad. In the majority of cases, both the commander and the command sergeant major are around the same age, have the same years of service, and are both going through similar experiences. Share these experiences as you establish bonds of trust and honesty.

Lastly, there is only one commander. He should not renounce his authority or responsibilities. He should cooperate and delegate. The commander needs to respect the sergeant major, inasmuch as the CSM, as well as the commander, is only a soldier in authority. Neither should be placed in a position susceptible to failure or isolation.

Both the commander and the command sergeant major need to know one another and understand how to work together as a team. The disposition of the commander in dealing with the CSM begins this process. However, more important is what occurs beyond “the words.” The potential of a command may be limited if the commander and command sergeant major assume their leadership responsibilities and command the unit to new levels of readiness. — Lieutenant Colonel Herbert F. Harback, *The Command Sergeant Major*, Engineer Magazine, October 1969, page 18.

The personal relationship between the commander and the command sergeant major is totally dependant upon the commander's personality. The commander may consider the sergeant major as his loyal enlisted friend, or he

may utilize him as an effective means for ensuring that things are done correctly and swiftly. In any case, this does not matter, as long as the sergeant major understands him and does the best work he can. –CSM Bob L. Williams, *The Sergeant Major*, Infantry Magazine, September-October 1969, page 18.

A good command relationship is based on honest communication and the ability to disagree without showing disrespect. –CSM Sandra Robinson, in *Walking and Talking the Talk*, NCO Journal, Winter 1993, page 12.

Upon assuming the command of your first battalion, you will be establishing your first commander-CSM relationship. Regardless of how many sergeants major you have worked with in the past, this is your first command sergeant major. It will be a learning experience, which earlier battalion commanders have undergone, and based on their comments with regard to command sergeants major, they only learned the correct way to utilize the CSM after changing commands and reflecting upon their experiences.

Although thousands of ideas and thoughts can be expressed regarding the relationship existing between commanders and CSMs, the foundation is openness, integrity, and absolute trust between the two parties. If these fundamental characteristics are lacking because of flaws in the CSM, find another one.

Treat your CSM as a professional. If you are unfortunate enough to have one of the very few command sergeants major who does not perform in a professional manner, be sure to give the position the respect it deserves, although you may feel you are obligated to relieve him from his duties. The way that you handle this situation will become common knowledge within the command. If you fail to separate the individual from the inherent prestige of the position, you will probably cause him to become inept at fulfilling his responsibilities.

Upon assuming command, the first person with whom you should speak is your CSM. You should invite him to your office immediately after beginning your command assignment. This meeting should be private and without interruptions. Solicit his opinion on the officers and key enlisted personnel by name and duty assignment and on matters such as the problems within the battalion, those things that the unit does well, and the relationship between the battalion and higher headquarters. His remarks will be the most truthful you will hear, inasmuch as it is his duty to tell you the absolute truth. His career depends on fulfilling his duties with openness and complete sincerity. Others do not have the same responsibility, but their careers are probably not dependent upon this type of relationship.

During the initial meeting with your CSM, ask him what his specific duties have been. Do not become concerned if the list is not lengthy. It is important for your CSM to have the freedom to:

- Have time to develop plans and implement measures and ideas for improving the battalion.

- Visit companies on a daily basis, especially at training sites.

- Inspect specific problematic areas that you have identified and on which you want his opinion or action.

- Eliminate those difficult situations that can be handled better through sergeant-major channels.

Speaking with your command sergeant major and other important individuals in your battalion will provide you with useful information for an internal evaluation of the unit. Once you have accomplished this, pay a visit to the brigade sergeant major. He represents an excellent source of information regarding battalion strengths and weaknesses in comparison with the other battalions in the brigade. He can also provide you with an evaluation of his CSM and his performance with respect to the other command sergeants major in the brigade. This visit will open the communication channels between you and the brigade CSM and will provide you with a solid base for subsequent interaction. You should communicate casually with the brigade sergeant major, but be selective. Do not use him as a substitute for your own CSM.

Define the position of the CSM both verbally and through your actions. Following, you will find a list of the actions and standards that will serve to enhance the relationship between the commander and the command sergeant major:

Communicate with the CSM in private, inasmuch as there is no intermediary between these two individuals in the chain of command. This is a fundamental point, but should be established early, thereby providing both parties with a clear understanding. Inform your staff, also in private, that the position of CSM is one of special enlisted advisor with direct access and accountability to you.

Allow him free access to you at all times. He will have information that you will need to know now and will know how and when to interrupt and report to you. There is nothing like knowing when an important telephone call is forthcoming from the brigade commander and being prepared to answer his questions. If your CSM maintains a good working relationship with the brigade CSM, this type of situation will be a regular occurrence.

Once you have made a decision after having considered recommendations coming from you and others, explain to your CSM that you expect him to support the decision. Again, this is a basic point, but “it removes any doubts” when it is reaffirmed.

Give the CSM’s opinion the consideration that it deserves. When a company commander proposes an action to which the CSM is opposed, listen to both sides in private without making the distinction between officer and enlisted. Remember that while the company commander argues for what he believes is best for the company, the sergeant major’s decision is grounded in what he believes is best for the battalion. The company commander is responsible for what his unit does or does not do; therefore, you should give the appropriate weight to his command. However, the experience factor of your CSM should receive equal consideration. The most fitting and opportune option should be the only criteria on which to base your decision, not the individual who presents the course of action.

Require that your company commanders and staff personnel inform you personally if they should have any complaints regarding the CSM. If they desire to resolve these issues directly with the CSM, that is their prerogative. To ensure differences are handled in a professional manner, only the battalion commander is qualified to make a decision regarding a situation of this nature.

Once the task force is in the field, the CSM should be able to move and should visit all the units he can. It is necessary for him to have a vehicle furnished with a radio and driver; he can also consider traveling by helicopter, if available, thereby saving time and shortening distances. The CSM should oversee the duties and responsibilities of noncommissioned officers bearing in mind the following matters: avoiding failure, keeping soldiers in mind, the allocation of Class I supplies (including ice and water), personal appearance and hygiene, vehicle maintenance, moral and esprit de corps stamina, wounded and hospitalized soldiers, cleanliness of the command area, and security.

The CSM should actively participate in after-action reviews to gain knowledge regarding unit performance. Then he should speak with first sergeants regarding ways to improve those areas where imperfections were observed. He needs to be where the action is, and this is not necessarily on the battlefield. His sixth sense should indicate to him where to focus his efforts to initiate or cease fire.

Once the field-training exercise has been concluded, the CSM needs to focus completely on policing the training areas under his responsibility. This is not an easy task; it requires planning and constant oversight. The CSM departs on the last aircraft, after all vehicles and other property have been turned in and after the majority of the soldiers have departed and the task force has been cleared of all responsibility. Keep your first sergeants informed. The CSM stays

behind until everything for which he is even remotely responsible has been completely covered, completed, or removed. –CSM Donald C. Cubbison, *Getting Ready for NTC: Tips for the CSM*, Army Times Magazine, Winter 1983, pages 22 and 23.

Of all the questions generated by commanders arriving to the National Training Center (NTC), the one most asked is—How is the CSM utilized at the NTC? According to CSM Robert Windham, CSM, NTC Operations Center, battalion and brigade CSMs that come to NTC are often times not utilized on the battlefield to a degree consistent with their knowledge, experience, and training. “Consequently, their units fail to attain maximum effectiveness during task-force and brigade-level operations,” states Windham. In a conversation with the CSMs, Windham came to realize that commanders frequently review CSM functions in accordance with how they are defined in the regulations. “On two separate occasions, the duties of the brigade and battalion command sergeant major are clearly defined to optimize NCO leadership skills throughout the command. This had significant impact on the success of these units during the rotation.

The commander used commander-CSM counseling extracts to prepare a memorandum for its staff and subordinate commanders. The memorandum defined the CSM's duties, responsibilities, and authority with specific directives on how to fulfill them. In the directives, the commander highlighted several fundamental points applicable to both training and combat scenarios. Therefore, the staff and subordinate commanders aggressively seek the CSM's advice and assistance during the rotation period. –Command Sergeant Major Jerry T. Alley, CSM, NTC, *The NTC Challenge*, NCO Journal, Summer 1991, page 14.

### **The CSM's role in Advising the Commander**

The Sergeant Major General sends the Lord General and the field marshal a report on the status of the army, so that the Lord General can issue his orders and directives. *Principles of Military Art*, 1642, page 7.

The command sergeant major should provide counsel in a moderate, calm, and precise fashion without leaving room for doubt, but with unwavering energy and enthusiasm, even at the worst times. *Army National Guard Noncommissioned Officer Handbook*, 1989, page A-17.

One of the most effective ways the CSM used to advise me was by scheduling my calendar events. If he found a weak area in the battalion that needed my attention, by way of my calendar, he let me know when and where to visit the unit or section. Invariably, he was always on target when he directed my

attention toward a particular area. –Colonel Glenn A. Smith, *Battalion Commanders Speak Out*, 1977, pages 1-20.

Our battalion command sergeant major knows 90 percent of the soldiers in the battalion by name, duty assignment, background, and problems. This offers me the ability to approach someone whom I trust and say, how are you? I will not only obtain the command perspective, but the climate at the soldier level. There is no other way to get it! --Lieutenant Colonel Donald H. Volta, *Command Sergeant Major: A New Breed of 'Old' Soldier*, *Soldiers Magazine*, March 1981, page 31.

### **Battalion Commanders' Manual, 1991:**

Your relationship with the CSM is essential; it should be rooted in mutual trust and respect. Seek his advice on everything that you plan to do. Ask him questions regarding his expectations and perceptions of the unit's strengths and weaknesses. Ensure that everyone realizes that you trust him fully, thereby allowing him to serve from a position of strength. Make certain that the company commanders include the CSM in the problem-solving process.

He is a doer as much as he is an advisor. Make him the primary source of noncommissioned-officer leadership development. Work as a team, but encourage him to follow his own course. He makes sure that the noncommissioned-officer tasks are accomplished. Provide him with a field vehicle and means of communication. He shares responsibility with you to make certain that soldiers know the mission, that they accomplish it fully and to the best of their ability, and that the chain of command responds to soldiers. Make him responsible for the quality control of the garrison barracks and the maintenance of the same. Have him review all enlisted personnel evaluation reports and the recognitions and recommendations for noncommissioned officers.

Allow the CSM to oversee matters concerning personnel actions, training/individual skill-qualification tests, individual training and evaluation programs, noncommissioned-officer leadership-development classes, enlisted personnel assignments, and training for first-sergeants. Insist that he supervise individual and small-unit training. Allow the CSM to lead training in specific events without the presence of officers (for example, the common-task exam, the expert infantryman's badge, and the field-health expert badge).

Include the CSM in decisions concerning the Military Code of Justice. Make sure that he is present when measures are taken regarding the Military Code of Justice. Ask him to bring good soldiers to you so that you can have the opportunity to converse with them informally. Page 20, 21, and 22.



The CSM has access to confidential information, which the commandant is unaware of, and vice versa. These two individuals should exchange information on a daily basis. The CSM and the commander should remain *active* and not *reactive* to situations that arise. Keeping each other informed helps the active side of the equation. –Lieutenant Colonel James R. Siket, *Duties and Roles of the Battalion Command Sergeant Major*, USAWC Document, 1987, page 15.

As a general rule, the battalion commander consults with his command sergeant major before issuing orders through the chain of command. This does not mean that the CSM comprises part of the chain of command, but that he should be familiar with the instructions that are being issued to enable him to effectively oversee the noncommissioned-officer support chain. FM 22-600-20, *The Army Noncommissioned Officer Guide*, 1980, page 18, endorsed by General Edward C. Meyer.

Do not exclude the sergeant major from the decision-making process regarding officer assignments. He possesses valuable information concerning officers' personalities and the specific needs of subordinate units. –Lieutenant Colonel Louis V. Hightower, *Battalion Commanders Speak Out*, 1977, page 2-5.

The CSM should play the part of devil's advocate concerning general orders. What effect will your orders have? Are they unwise? Harmful? Some of us interpret playing the devil's advocate as something negative, when, in reality, it may be negative and have a terrible effect when general orders are challenged at an inopportune time and place. Discretion, tact, and asking questions go hand in hand. –CSM Walter W. Krueger, *CSM: The First Challenge*, no date given, page 58.

### **The Battalion Commander, CSM, and Staff**

Regular battalion commanders should take the time to formally educate their subordinates on the obligations, duties, and responsibilities of the CSM. This could be a possible discussion topic for an officer professional-development class. Company-level officers should be encouraged to seek counsel and guidance from the CSM; all subordinate officers should see him as their battalion CSM. Commanders should make certain that the executive officer and S-3 work in close coordination and cooperation with the CSM, paying particular attention to his duties and responsibilities as delineated by the commander, his methods, and his achievements. Inasmuch as the commander has the mission of preparing the executive officer and S-3 for future assignments as battalion commanders, the effective utilization of the CSM should be one of the teaching points. A logical point of departure may be the block on the CSM Evaluation Report that describes the responsibilities of the position. –Colonel Claude W. Abate and Lieutenant Colonel Warren P. Giddings, *What is a Sergeant Major* USAWC Document, 1985, page 28.

The command sergeant major can be an energetic personality in the battalion easily able to persuade a lieutenant or captain to seek his counsel. In some cases, the battalion commander should insist that the battery commander seek the counsel of the command sergeant major, and when his help is requested, the CSM should respond with interest to those needs. –Lieutenant Colonel James R. Siket, *Duties and Roles of the Battalion Command Sergeant Major*, USAWC Document, 1987, page 14.

A good staff officer who makes the most of the CSM will find that he has a loyal friend. He is familiar with the route that the documents you submit should follow, and he knows someone at each location where they stop and can assist you with expert advice. In all his dealings with the staff, the sergeant major is trying to make the members look good in the commander's eyes. –CSM Robert B. Begg, *Sergeant Major*, *Army Magazine*, January 1966, pages 38 and 39.

Anything that the CSM can do to assist the staff helps the commander and headquarters at the same time. –CSM Bob L. Williams, *The Sergeant Major*, *Infantry Magazine*, September-October 1969, page 18.

Leadership demands are the same for staff noncommissioned officers. Many NCOs from the combat branches of service consider staff positions as temporary positions that should merely be tolerated until being reassigned to a combat unit. However, staff positions are important. Veteran NCOs who have witnessed the failure of operations when staff plans and logistics are tested in the “real world” have special insight that may be lacking among other team members who have not had similar experiences. Furthermore, each member contributes special expertise and knowledge to the team. Noncommissioned officers may play an essential role in making training mirror reality and in assisting in developing plans for future exercises. For example, if the staff does not replace ammunition or does not set aside time for vehicle maintenance, commanders will have to participate in combat operations with less ammunition and fewer vehicles.

Expert noncommissioned officers should make it known that they represent an important element of the planning and policy-making process. Simultaneously, staff NCOs should not become discouraged if their advice is not accepted. Often times, soldiers “close themselves up in their shell” when the staff rejects information that they consider to be important for a plan. This may make them reluctant to offer information. Staff NCOs are responsible for providing the knowledge that they have acquired throughout their years of experience in the field and for continuing to supply this information and experience during the planning phases. –CSM James C. McKinney, CSM Lyle C. Daniels, and CSM Michael Lawson, *Combat Maneuver Training Center (CMTTC): Training for Combat*, *NCO Journal*, Summer 1991, page 8.

Experience, especially at the staff level, is essential for the CSM. A soldier whose greatest level of experience has been to serve as a first sergeant—regardless of how well he performed in this post—will require an adaptation period when assigned to the position of the commander's primary enlisted representative for the battalion staff. Meanwhile, if the new battalion CSM fails to remove himself from the role of the energetic first sergeant and to learn to work with the staff, soldiers suffer. —CSM Glen E. Morrel, in *News Call*, Army Magazine, May 1984, page 75.

The executive officer, commander, and CSM should become acquainted and develop trust one for the other. Publicly, they should express the same opinion. *The Battalion Commander's Handbook*, 1996, page 19.

Just as the commander establishes a relationship with the executive officer and the CSM, the executive officer likewise should work very closely with the CSM. —Colonel Charles D. Beck, *Command Leadership and Effective Staff Support*, 1996, page 47.

The executive officer and the CSM should be of the same opinion as the commander. Colonel Neil L. Putz, *Command Leadership and Effective Staff Support*, 1996, page 49.

When the battalion commander and the CSM are away on TDY (temporary duty), the interim CSM, as interim commander, is the first individual consulted regarding something out of the ordinary. *Battalion XO, a Treasury of NCO Quotations*, 1997.

### **Integration of the New CSM**

The briefing that the new CSM receives is an important factor in the development of the role that he will play in the unit. It is not enough to simply assign him an escort/sponsor, as required by regulation. In some situations, assigning one's predecessor to serve as escort is not necessarily the best solution. The guidelines concerning the responsibilities of an escort cannot be simply confined to a checklist. In reality, the same information given to the new battalion commander is probably along the same lines, with regard to amount of detail, as the information that should be provided to the CSM.

From the time that he first makes contact with the unit, the new CSM should be treated like the senior noncommissioned officer assigned to the unit and not in an indifferent fashion. Upon the arrival of the new CSM, a recognition ceremony should be conducted both for him and the outgoing CSM. By participating in this ceremony, the new CSM will learn much regarding the attitude of the battalion toward the CSM. Of course, the degree of complexity of the ceremony will vary depending on the situation. However, the key element here is the recognition.

Immediately after the ceremony, the new CSM should receive a briefing by the noncommissioned officers with whom he will work in the future. These briefings will update the CSM on all aspects of the unit, how the battalion commander operates, and what was expected and received from the previous CSM.

The initial chat taking place between the battalion commander and the new CSM is perhaps the most critical activity occurring during the introduction process. It is unnecessary to provide guidance regarding how to conduct this meeting except by stating that it should be theoretical in nature. Inasmuch as the CSM is new and the commander has been leading the battalion for some time, perhaps it is better for the commander to initiate the chat session by describing his perception of the unit. The commander should emphasize at least one point—the value of leadership, ideas, and CSM's experience with respect to the battalion. At least in theory, the commander should inform him how he would like the CSM to operate and what authority he will have within the battalion. The CSM should leave the office with a better understanding of his role within the unit. —Lieutenant Colonel John L. Lorms, *The Role and Duties of the CSM*, Infantry Magazine, January-February 1974, pages 35-36.

One day I visited the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division's armory in Ashaffenburg, Germany. I asked the young armorer if he knew CSM Ligon (CSM James Ligon, the Division CSM). With eyes wide open, he exclaimed, "sir, everyone knows CSM Ligon!" CSM Ligon inspected all the division's weapon in their first 30 days on the job, together with the noncommissioned officers from the respective chain of command. From that day forward, we have had no problems regarding the weapons. The best way to describe it is by saying, "he was everywhere at the same time." Lieutenant General Robert L. Wetzel in a letter dated 29 August 1997.

## COMPANY COMMANDER—FIRST SERGEANT

### The Company Commander and the First Sergeants

The most difficult post I have held and the one that I remember having the most responsibilities for than any other was that of first sergeant in combat. Nevertheless, it was a good job. General John W. Vessey, *From Private to Chairman 1st Sergeant Was the Toughest*, September 1983, page 6.

There is no one else in the company, except perhaps for the captain, upon whom soldiers depend regarding discipline, oversight, guidance, and general wellbeing than the first sergeant. This is a rank replete with duties and responsibilities. These responsibilities put the first sergeant in direct contact with the troops, where he maintains an influence that, while powerful, is also immediate and personal; and experience attests to the fact that the status of each company will improve or deteriorate in proportion to the ability and worthiness of the first sergeant. —Major General Jacob Brown in a letter to the Secretary of War, 1825, *American State Papers, Military Affairs*, Vol. 3, page 111.

“The first sergeant is responsible for transmitting to the unit commander and his soldiers all the experiences he has learned over the years,” indicates First Sergeant Miles Retherford. Retherford’s advice is similar to that of General Omar Bradley, who stated, “When soldiers know their job, the first sergeant knows that he has done his.” *The First Sergeant*, Sergeant’s Business Magazine, March-April 1989, page 17.

The company will be a reflection of his persona. If his company is a failure, it is because you are a failure as a captain. —Major Christian Bach, in a speech entitled *Leadership*, 1918, Congressional Record Appendix, Volume 88, part 9, page A2252.

The soldier who has acquired such a level of trust with his officers so as to be appointed first sergeant for the company should consider the importance of his office; the level of discipline displayed by the company, the conduct exhibited by its personnel, the punctuality shown in complying with orders, and the consistency demonstrated in troop performance, by in large, will depend on how well you keep them informed. —General Frederick von Steuben, *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*, 1779, page 149.

The captain should make certain that his objectives and ideas are achieved. This can only result in profound loyalty. This loyalty includes the right of the first sergeant to disagree with the captain, discuss an issue, and then, even if still unpersuaded, faithfully carry out the captain’s wishes. Many second-rate captains have been able to maintain a good reputation and keep their troops in good condition, or have been transformed into good soldiers by a marvelous

first sergeant. –Colonel Charles A. Romeyn, *The First Sergeant*, Cavalry Journal, July 1925, pages 297 and 298.

In my first battery command, respectfully but frequently, my first sergeant would remind me that he had more service stripes than I had bars and years of service combined, and that it would be a good idea to put his advice into practice from time to time. –Lieutenant Colonel Norman E. Jarock, *Battalion Commanders Speak Out*, 1977, page 6-3.

Upon assuming command of a company, the company commander and the first sergeant should develop and come to an agreement regarding the unit's goals, standards, and objectives:

--Specify and publish them. (For example—a goal for all soldiers to achieve 260 on the physical-training test).

--Bear in mind the “forbidden matters: those catastrophic, unredeemable events.” (For example, security, responsibility for weapons and ammunition, drugs, driving under the influence and instances of absence without leave [AWOL]). You and your first sergeant should be on the same “frequency” regarding priorities so as to ensure fairness.

--Show your first sergeant a complete copy of your support form on your officer evaluation report.

Many new company commanders are impulsive and sure of themselves and tend to ignore counsel from your expert and capable first sergeant. Generally, a few mistakes will bring him back into reality; this humiliation can be avoided by using a little common sense. Listen to your first sergeant, and avail yourself of his wealth of experience. Good communication skills also involve listening. The first sergeant should be capable of telling you (the company commander) both sides of an issue. He cannot resolve it without hearing both sides. –Brigadier General John G. Meyer, *Company Command: The Bottom Line*, 1990, pages 43, 36, and 41.

It is imperative that the company commander and first sergeant work well as a cohesive team and that they include the executive officer on their team. These three individuals should stick together regardless of what transpires, even if they do not like each other. –Sergeant First Class Paul H. Johnson, *Brigade First Sergeant*, Infantry Magazine, November-December 1986, page 21.

The first sergeant is the most indispensable, certainly one of the most famous, and probably the most intimidating individual in the United States Army. He should be strong and thorough, the type of individual who genuinely likes the outside world, competent in office tasks, and capable of navigating through the disconcerting tumultuous maze known as “army paperwork.” First sergeants

have saved their captains' and lieutenants' skin on many occasions. Not only do recruits and privates learn military discernment from their first sergeant, but if they are prudent, officers do as well. –Samuel T. Williamson, *Top-Yes, Top-Sergeant*, New York Times Magazine, January 18, 1942, page 14.

Commanders and first sergeants are not friends. Their relationship is much more important than that. It is a bond based on mutual trust and respect—a connection that exists from the moment that the battalion commander passes the unit colors to the company commander. The first sergeant does not think, “You, the company commander, must earn my respect”—this respect is offered to the commander automatically. The army cannot allow time to develop this respect because the unit may begin combat operations the following day. This mutual respect is rooted in becoming familiar with the two individuals' backgrounds and their mutual dedication to serving the nation. As the company commander and first sergeant work together, this bond can be strengthened, weakened, or severed. A weak relationship can be repaired through sincere dialogue. However, once broken, the relationship cannot be restored.

Members of the command group should recognize each others' strong and weak points, inasmuch as these represent the strengths and weaknesses of the team. In order for the command group to reach a divergent point, it should take full advantage of its strong points while covering for the weak points of others, although this involves breaking the traditional roles of the officer and noncommissioned officer. –CSM Jimmie W. Spencer, in a letter dated 1 September 1997.

Good first sergeants make company commanders look good. *The Battalion Commander's Handbook*, 1992, page 21.

After attaining the rank of first sergeant, I realized for the first time the importance of the relationship between the company commander and first sergeant in setting up a strong command team and in establishing the command climate. There must be a bond between these two commanders before they can build a team. This relationship can be established by keeping five elements in mind: relationship, responsibilities, loyalty, duty, and goals.

--Relationship – The relationship between the company commander and the first sergeant must be grounded in understanding and mutual respect. They should share both good and bad experiences and ideas. They should be considerate of one another and give each other honest answers. Openness should guide the mutual concessions between the members of the team. Friendship is important as well—not a “close” friendship, but one based on genuine concern one for the other and for the other's family.

--Responsibilities – These are defined in Army Regulation (AR) 660-20. The commander is responsible for everything, and the first sergeant

takes charge of the implementation phase. Tasks should be shared in a way that is manageable for both leaders.

--Loyalty – This is the element that unites the team. This relationship should be based on a profound degree of loyalty.

--Duty – This is professionalism at its best. Both the company commander and the first sergeant should be true professionals and should set high standards.

--Goals – Early on, establish short-term and long-term goals. These goals should continue through the period leading up to the next change of command. Establishing these goals will prove very worthwhile.

A command team results from the commander and first sergeant's implementation of the five aforementioned elements. This team has a sense of direction and duty grounded in mutual trust, and they support and assist one another in accomplishing the mission. The team's attitude will help both individuals in leading the company, looking out for their soldiers' wellbeing, and in directing them where they want them to go. --First Sergeant Grover L. Watters, *Five Steps to Success*, NCO Journal, Winter 1993, page 7.

Establish a time limit governing the "official" portion of unit meetings. First Sergeant Michael Teal determined the duration of my meetings and I did for his. In this fashion, we complied with all schedules. Captain Thomas R. Siller, *NCO Development Program*, Army Trainer Magazine, Summer 1983, page 15.

Good and capable noncommissioned officers comprise the strong backbone of an organization, whether at the troop, company, or battery level, and if the NCOs are not at least reasonably effective, the commander's frustration will be unending. Lieutenant C. W. Farber, *To Promote the Efficiency of Non-Commissioned Officers*, Journal of the Military Institution of the United States, January 1898, page 98.

### **General of the Army George C. Marshall on the Subject of First Sergeants**

I kept the first sergeants on the "officer-of-the-day" list. They did this job very well, and I always had full confidence in the state of the garrison when one of my men was on guard. They took this responsibility seriously and very little transpired in the unit without their knowledge. Furthermore, I insisted in personally introducing them to the Commander, Area Army Corps, during his visits to the garrison. --General of the Army George C. Marshall, 1941, *The Papers of George Carlett Marshall*, Volume 2, page 546.



Captain Charles Lanham wrote the following to General George Marshall: "Your old friends, the first sergeants here, never tire of talking about you." General Marshall responded: "I remember my year at Fort Screven as one of the best in my military field, and, in many ways, it was very enlightening. The most gratifying aspect of this experience was the contact I had with an extraordinary group of noncommissioned officers. I believe that we had the best group of first sergeants that I have ever seen together in one place. —General of the Army George C. Marshall, 1939, *The Papers of George Carlett Marshall*, Volume 2, page 58.

## PLATOON LEADER – PLATOON SERGEANT

### Platoon Leaders

A tremendous source of aid during your training comes from your noncommissioned officers and fellow officers. Make the most use of this support from the day you are commissioned as an officer. This will remain with you for the entire time that you have the privilege of wearing the uniform. Professional development is the result of much study, discipline, and hard work. As a young officer, you should take advantage of one of the greatest sources of practical knowledge—the noncommissioned-officer corps as demonstrated by individuals of all ranks, those competent sergeants exhibiting unwavering dedication. —General Carl E. Vuono, *Collected Works*, 1991, pages 71 and 262.

This period of time when we serve as company commanders and platoon leaders in the forefront of the United States Army...is really the best. This time is exhilarating when you are developing personally—the time when you have the opportunity to work closely with young soldiers, and of course, veteran noncommissioned officers who, in the most constructive way possible, have taught you with a knee on the ground and with the toe of their boots. —General Edward C. Meyer, *E. C. Meyer*, 1983, pages 83-84.

The “care and refinement” of lieutenants is the duty of noncommissioned officers. —General Frederick J. Kroesen in, *For NCOs: Leadership, Hard Work, and Training*, Army Magazine, October 1980, page 24.

What difficult times young army officers would have faced had it not been for experienced NCOs! I have felt deeply sorry for voluntary officers that I have seen start off in the middle of a war with completely inexperienced regiments and without a veteran sergeant to teach them something. No country should be so cruel to its soldiers. —Major General John M. Schofield, 1897, *Forty-Six Years in the Army*, page 18.

A primary factor for success is how well you get along with others, which is an aspect that permeates all the ranks of the army. This highlights the need for mutual respect, mutual professional development, and reciprocal good will – and that both parties bear in mind that the problem requires a special effort when young officers who are lacking in experience are involved. The NCOs in your unit may be the best professional friend that a new lieutenant has—provided that both exhibit correct military courtesy and mutual respect. —Major Division Aubrey S. Newman, *Follow Me II*, 1992, pages 17 and 63.

Platoon leaders, look at each other from the platoon sergeant’s point of view and try to be the type of platoon leader that you would like to have if you were the platoon sergeant. With regard to your relationship with the platoon sergeant and his noncommissioned officers, if you do not have a copy of TC 22-

6, *The Army Noncommissioned Officer Guide*, then acquire one. This manual identifies the position of the NCO in the United States Army. The manual contains chapters on leadership, authority and the officer chain of command, the noncommissioned-officer support chain, officer duties and responsibilities, and the relations between officers and NCOs. You should read and understand this manual.

Regarding the first sergeant, do not waste time idly in his office. Do not lie back on his desk and do not sit in his chair. Remember, the first sergeant is the senior NCO in the company, and he deserves your complete respect. Listen to him, as he has much to teach you. —Major General Clay T. Buskingham, *To Second Lieutenants...and to All*, *Engineers Magazine*, Spring 1981, pages 11-12.

Without noncommissioned officers, we would all have to learn the hard way. What I learned from the first NCO with whom I worked, Sergeant First Class Alfonso M. Rodriguez, has been of great benefit to me throughout my career. I learned much from him regarding the soldiers, my job, and how to be an officer. I cannot overemphasize how valuable it was for me that he was a man of integrity. —Colonel Ward B. Nickish, *A Treasury of NCO Quotations*, 1997, no page number provided.

Many noncommissioned officers accept, as an implicit duty, the responsibility for training a novice second lieutenant, but this only occurs when the “student is willing.” --Colonel Griffin N. Dodge, *Lessons from a Mess Sergeant Encourage Dedication, Caring*, *Army Magazine*, January 1986, page 17.

Consult with veteran soldiers and, in particular, noncommissioned officers, regarding matters that you do not understand. Ask them about different issues. *Officer's Manual*, 1906, pages 34 and 177.

Lieutenants need to listen to their NCOs because these individuals have already acquired a great deal of experience. Lieutenant Colonel Jim Hawkins, *A Treasury of NCO Quotations*, 1997, no page number given.

NCOs and lieutenants should be familiar with each other's leadership background. They should share knowledge in the area of training and in the thinking process. Lieutenant Colonel Arthur A. Schulcz, in *Developing Leadership*, *Soldiers Magazine*, July 1984, page 24.

When you join an organization, you will meet up with a ready group of individuals, who will only expect from you those qualities that merit respect—loyalty and compliance. Commissions do not make leaders, only officers. If you possess the right attributes, you are going to serve in positions where you may become leaders. Major Christian Bach, in a speech entitled, *Leadership*, 1918, *Congressional Record Appendix*, Volume 88, section 9, page A2251.

The officer/noncommissioned officer relationship is beneficial for officers at all levels, but especially for young officers. Young officers receive the benefit of between 10 and 15 years of experience gained through enormous effort. If everyone had to follow the same promotion scale, the development of first-class officers would take a lot of time. A lieutenant assigned as platoon leader has a proficient NCO to assist him, and all the knowledge and experience possessed by this individual will help the lieutenant more rapidly become an effective leader. Major C. I. Yamamoto, *A Treasury of NCO Quotations*, 1997, no page number provided.

What should the noncommissioned officer expect from his young officer? First, an officer is expected to be mentally alert and morally straight. He should be aware that his soldiers' needs come before his own. He should possess a high degree of physical and moral character.

An officer demonstrates his courage. An individual with an inferior background will be disparaged. Frugality will be respected, but not parasitism. Nothing angers an NCO more than observing a lieutenant enter the dining facility in the morning and picking up a sandwich or bowl of cereal without paying. He knows that if another NCO had done the same, he would have been reprimanded or even disciplined.

No enlisted service member likes to hear an officer refer to another officer in a demeaning fashion. Gossip and slander have no place among soldiers, and those who chose to participate in these activities are simply exhibiting their true, unrefined character. NCOs recognize that an officer who speaks contemptuously about his peers cannot possibly have respect for his subordinates. His experience as a veteran soldier tells him that this type of officer, who behaves disrespectfully toward others, is generally trying to conceal his/her own feelings of inferiority and shortcomings. What causes even more indignation is the officer who speaks badly of enlisted personnel, inasmuch as these individuals are practically powerless to respond.

One attribute of a good leader is intellectual honesty. As the old adage so correctly states—"never intimidate with threats that you cannot actually impose." Do not expect the new officer to know everything. If there is an issue in particular in which he lacks knowledge, why not recognize that? It is easier to admit that you lack knowledge of a particular topic than to be dishonest. As someone once said, "if you are honest enough to admit that you do not know something, they will believe you whenever you say that you *do* know something."

An officer is expected to behave in a respectful fashion and not be cantankerous or moan and complain. Loyalty is due both to superiors and subordinates. When unpleasant tasks are assigned, a person lacking in self-confidence would state, "This is the commander's idea, not mine." Officers should be open and straightforward with subordinates and, as was previously

mentioned, should not talk about them behind their backs. It is important to counsel subordinates periodically and point out their strengths and weaknesses to them. A clever technique is to refrain from saying anything about NCOs that you would not say directly to them. Subordinates should be the first to recognize your faults, not the last. If you remember to express praise in public, reprimand in private, and maintain complete honesty, you will earn the trust and respect of your command. The safest way to lose noncommissioned officers for good is to humiliate them in the presence of their peers or reprimand them severely in public.

During your career, an officer's subordinates will come to him seeking counsel and advice. He should never refuse to listen to a soldier's personal problems. A five-minute conversation often times will resolve a small matter that, if left unattended, could snowball into an enormous problem.

In a formal or informal fashion, an officer must assume the right to mediate many complaints and objections of soldiers against their noncommissioned officers. All U.S. citizens seem to be inclined to claim the role of the victim. Be careful before taking action; listen to both sides. An insightful sense of justice is an invariable attribute. It will not make you popular, but will gain you much respect.

Officers should guide their subordinates, answer their questions, and supervise them. Micro-management shows a lack of trust and creates unnecessary friction. Officers should learn when it is wise to be present and when to be absent.

All military leaders possess three common traits: they know and do their job, they ensure the wellbeing of their personnel, and they defend what is right. The true spirit of a unit comes from a similar spirit in the heart of its commander – whether this command is an army or a platoon. Major Herald F. Stout, *The NCO Meets his Junior Officer*, Army Magazine, May 1967, pages 66-70.

During my years in the army, a good platoon sergeant always wanted his platoon leader to be the best in the company and in the battalion. Good officers listen and acquire from him/her the knowledge to become successful, and these individuals become good commanders throughout their careers. No platoon sergeant wanted to have an inexperienced leader, and this includes all levels of noncommissioned officers, i.e., company, battalion, etc. The goal of a platoon sergeant is to have a platoon leader who will make him proud, one of whom he can speak – and when this happens, any criticism levied against the platoon leader will result in strong debate. Sergeant Major of the Army Glen E. Morrel, in a letter dated 26 August 1997.

As the CSM, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, one of my duties was to teach a class on officer/NCO relations and the function of the first

sergeant/CSM in dealing with commanders and senior enlisted advisors in the Pre-Command Course. One of the things that I would tell them was the following story:

“During the basic course for new lieutenants, the instructor presented them with the following problem to resolve. The mission was to erect a flagpole, and to carry out the mission, a sergeant and three soldiers were available. The lieutenants had 30 minutes to formulate the course of action they would follow, after which, the instructor would ask for the solutions. Each lieutenant gave a detailed explanation regarding the best method for completing the job. Finally, the instructor gave them the correct answer: ‘Sergeant, I want the pole here; I will return in two hours to inspect.’ I believe that this story, true or not, tell us what we need to know concerning officer/NCO relations. CSM Jimmie W. Spencer, in a letter dated 1 September 1997.

What do we expect of you as officers, commanders, and leaders? We expect that you will exhibit unyielding personal integrity, the highest standards of moral virtue and personal bearing. Additionally, you should demonstrate fairness, resolve, and work toward finding solutions; you should maintain dignity and show genuine concern; you should feel compassion and be thorough; and you should treat soldiers as individuals with distinct problems.

Furthermore, we expect you to exhibit a high degree of self-confidence, boldness in working based on your convictions, and confidence in demonstrating strength of character. You should defend your soldiers when they have complied with your orders, even when they commit errors in the process, and accept blame when you are wrong.

We expect you to state with determination that “this soldier deserves a promotion, and I want him to be promoted.” Further, you should have the courage to say that “this individual is incompetent and will be promoted over my dead body!” Gentlemen, I beseech you not to promote a soldier because he is a good person, has a wife and five children, because he has economical problems, or because he owes money. If he is not capable of fulfilling the obligations of his rank, do not commit an injustice to him and us by promoting him. When he or you leave, he will become someone else’s problem.

We expect you to exhibit courage in the face of danger. During your commission, opportunities will arise where you will be able to demonstrate your courage and leadership skills. Opportunities will come up in which you will emerge as heroes. A hero is a person who faces a challenging or dangerous situation and employs whatever means available to make it bearable or resolve it.

Do not act recklessly and expose your soldiers to unnecessary risks that will diminish the probability of their survival. This would only affect their self-confidence.

Now, gentlemen, you know what we expect of you. What can you expect from us? From the majority of us you can expect loyalty to your position, devotion to our cause, admiration for the honesty of your efforts, valor and character to equal yours, strength and motivation paralleled to yours, as well as spirit and a drive for success. From us you can expect love of God, country, and duty similar to your love for God, country, and duty.

The heat does not bother us if you sweat with us. The cold does not bother us if you are also trembling from the cold with us. And if the mission so requires, we will carry the attack to the very gates of hell!

Gentlemen, you must accept us—we were here first. We will be accepting of you, and when we are, you will recognize it. We are not going to celebrate with much pomp and circumstance, wave banners, or carry you over our shoulders toward the parade field. However, perhaps during a company social gathering, we will raise our canteens full of beer and say, “Lieutenant, you’re okay.” Simply that.

Remember one thing. Very few noncommissioned officers earned their stripes without having demonstrated something to someone at one time in some place. If your platoon sergeant is mediocre, if he is slow in assuming his responsibilities, if he eludes you, then perhaps not long ago someone refused to trust him, someone failed to support his decisions, someone ridiculed him when he had made a mistake. Internal wounds heal slowly, while the external wounds disappear even more slowly.

The orders commissioning you as officers in the United States Army designate you to assume command. There are no orders, letters, or rank insignias designating you as leaders. Leaders are made, not born. Leadership is developed from the inside.

You do not wear leadership on your sleeves, shoulders, caps, or business cards. Whether you are lieutenants or generals, we are the individuals whom you have to convince, and we are the ones who will make the greatest concessions.

You are leaders in an army where we have served for many years, and you help us defend the country that we have loved for so many years. I wish you happiness, good fortune, and success in the emotional and challenging years ahead. May God bless you! --CSM John G. Stepanek, *As a Senior NCO Sees It*, Army Digest, August 1967, pages 5-6.

Allow your noncommissioned officers to deal with the problems arising out of the platoon, but make certain that they keep you informed. When a noncommissioned officer has exhausted all means in trying to resolve these problems, then you should intervene. On the other hand, it is not possible for noncommissioned officers to settle all the issues that arise in the platoon; therefore, the officer must be sure to recognize a problem or deficiency and know who to correct it.

Be polite and keep yourself available, but do not behave like a “good boy.” You will be considered a good person by accomplishing the mission and looking out for your soldiers’ wellbeing.